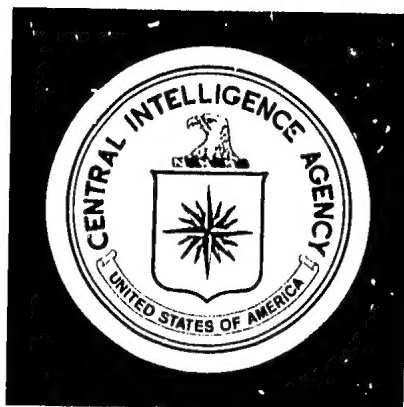


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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

# Intelligence Memorandum

*The Argentine Elections*

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8 March 1973  
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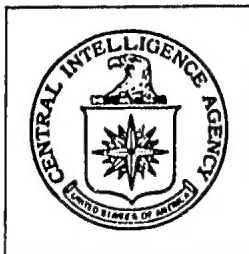
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## The Argentine Elections

8 March 1973

### Summary

Two years ago the military set about to restore civilian government. As the countdown to elections enters its final days, the armed forces are having second thoughts. The possibility that the Peronists may regain power is a live one, and the prospect has rekindled the old fears and hatreds that prompted the armed forces to ban the followers of Juan Peron from full participation in the political process ever since the ouster of their leader in 1955.

President Lanusse, who initiated the restoration process, has become the strongest advocate of military action to prevent a Peronist victory, but he is opposed by a majority of senior officers who fear a strong, possibly violent, public reaction if the elections are canceled or the Peronists proscribed. Those officers who favor elections appear to have won their point, and the first round will probably be held as scheduled on 11 March.

The Peronists are almost certain to lead in the balloting in the first round, but are unlikely to win a majority of the vote. This will require a presidential runoff on 8 April. The runoff will most likely pit Hector Campora, the Peronist candidate, against Ricardo Balbin, the standard bearer of the Radical Civic Union.

Should the Peronists draw less than 40 percent of the vote in the first round, Balbin will be in a good position to rally the anti-Peronists and win the runoff. A Peronist vote in excess of 40 percent would give them the edge in the second round, and the military would face the painful choice of accepting a probable Peronist victory or taking preventive action that could stir strong public opposition. There is, of course, still a considerable reservoir of anti-Peron feeling in the military establishment, and the pressure to keep the Peronists out will be strong.

If the military does not step in and halt the process, a civilian government will be inaugurated on 25 May. The Peronists and the Radicals reportedly have agreed that whichever party wins will bring the other into the government. In any event, it will be a transitional government and the military will continue to have a major voice in the making of national policy. The real test will be whether the new government will be able to break the pattern of the last 20 years, serve out its four-year term, and transfer power peacefully to an elected successor.

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### The Call to Elections

The elections to be held on 11 March will be the culmination of two years of planning and maneuvering by President Lanusse, the armed forces, civilian politicians, and the 77-year-old former dictator, Juan Peron. Since Lanusse announced in March 1971 that he would turn power over to an elected government, Argentine politics have taken some bizarre turns, and the current situation bears little resemblance to what Lanusse and the military had in mind when they started the process. In fact, President Lanusse now doubts the wisdom of going through with the elections at all.

General Alejandro Lanusse seized power from President Levingston in March 1971 with the aim of accelerating the exit of the military from the day-to-day chores of governing. The military establishment was tired of the job after six years of trying without success to solve Argentina's deep-rooted social, political, and economic problems. Lanusse was army commander, chief of the military junta, and President of Argentina and was thus in a stronger position than any of his predecessors. He set out with high hopes of ending, or at least suppressing, the sharp political divisions that had disrupted every administration since Peron was ousted in 1955.

President Lanusse set out to reintegrate the Peronists into the political life of the nation without returning Peron to power. He also wanted to rejuvenate the country's political parties by eliminating the many small parties and splinter groups and by providing an opportunity for new, younger leadership. To these ends, Lanusse hoped to create what he termed the Grand National Accord. As the designer of this vehicle for national unity, Lanusse apparently expected that he would be named by public acclaim to head a unity government.

Lanusse has failed to achieve most of his objectives. Nine candidates, including a loyal Peronist, are running for the presidency, and 62 national and provincial parties are contesting congressional, provincial, and local elections across the country. There are, however, few new faces to be seen among the candidates for important national and provincial offices. The Peronists have continued to follow their own course, and their campaign slogan calls for a Peron return to power. Even those candidates known in the past for their ties to the military are seeking to put distance between themselves and the government, seeing a strong anti-government, anti-Lanusse stance as the surest way of attracting votes.

### Lanusse vs Peron

Lanusse's biggest setback in his two-year effort to bring stable elected government to his country was his failure to eliminate former dictator Juan

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Peron as the predominant Argentine political figure. The 77-year-old Peron has lived outside the country since he was ousted by the armed forces in 1955, but despite his long absence from the scene and advanced age, he has been able to thwart all efforts to cut him down to size or split him from his followers.

President Lanusse sought to lessen the divisions between Peronist and anti-Peronist, and at the same time reduce Peron's influence, by wooing the large moderate Peronist labor sector. He did attract some labor support by offering generous wage increases, but stumbled in his effort to out-manuever the wily Peron. First he sought to buy off the former dictator with financial incentives, then to placate him by upgrading his official place in Argentine history and by returning to him Eva Peron's body, which the military had spirited away from Argentina and buried in Italy after Peron's fall in 1955. Peron readily accepted these offerings, but declined to take himself out of the picture or to give his support to Lanusse's Grand National Accord.

These plays having come to naught, Lanusse next tried to discredit the old dictator in the eyes of his followers. He sought to brand Peron a coward for sitting in Madrid and issuing orders to his lieutenants in Argentina. To make the charge stick, the President and his military colleagues took a calculated risk. They removed the legal bars to Peron's return to Argentina and restored his political rights.

Peron did not take the bait at once. He sat in splendid exile in Spain, but began to hint that he might accept the Peronist presidential nomination. The mere threat of a Peron presidential candidacy was enough to worry the military. Lanusse reacted by taking both himself and Peron out of the race. The President decreed that all candidates had to be resident in the country and out of the government by 25 August 1972. Lanusse stayed in government, and Peron stayed in Spain. He feared an assassination attempt and seemed reluctant to put his political strength to the test.

Peron's followers in Argentina, however, enthusiastically greeted Lanusse's invitation to participate in the elections. They pressed Peron to do more than just endorse Peronist participation; they strongly urged him to return to his homeland to give his followers the lift that, they thought, would carry them to power. In time it became apparent that the Peronists would participate in the elections with or without his authorization and that unless he kept his old promise to return, Lanusse's charges of cowardice and lack of concern would undercut the base of Peronist support.

Lanusse had opened the way for Peron to return, confident that the former dictator, comfortable in Madrid and fearful of personal attack by enemies in Argentina, would not accept the challenge. Peron continued to promise publicly that he would return because he was sure the armed forces would intercede to keep him out of the country. In retrospect, it would

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### ELECTION DATA

#### Electoral Calendar:

Election	11 March 1973
Runoff (If Needed)	8 April 1973
Inauguration	25 May 1973

#### Offices to be Filled (All terms 4 Years)

#### Number

President	1
Vice President	1
Senators	69
Deputies	243
Provincial Governors	23
Vice-Governors	18
Provincial Senators	226
Provincial Deputies	751
Municipal Authorities	7,137

#### Voters

Eligible to vote - All Argentine citizens over 18 years of age  
Registered to vote - 14.1 million  
Total population - 23.4 million

#### Electoral Districts

24 - (22 Provinces, 1 Federal Capital, 1 National Territory)

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seem that neither Lanusse nor Peron really expected the trip to take place, but each called the other's bluff.

On 17 November 1972, Peron returned to Argentina after 17 years of exile. He was not greeted as a returning hero by cheering throngs as he had hoped and as the military had feared. Many ardent Peronists were disappointed when Peron turned out to be just another politician, and an aging one at that. They were even more disappointed when he declined to challenge the government's ruling that he was ineligible to run for president.

Lanusse's gamble seemed to have paid off when Peron returned to Spain after organizing the Peronists and several small parties into the Justicialista Liberation Front and naming his "loyal servant" Hector Campora as the front's presidential candidate. Campora proved to be highly unpopular with labor and other moderate Peronists and some important leaders began to talk of bolting the front. When it appeared that Campora's divisive effect would ensure a Peronist defeat, the government election board ratified his candidacy.

The government was premature. Despite Campora's unpopularity, the Peronist rank and file displayed once again its constant loyalty to Peron. At least one Peronist labor leader, who publicly opposed Campora, was forced out of his post and out of the country. Others were cajoled or threatened into returning to the fold. By mid-January, Campora had gained effective control of the movement and had even begun to generate some enthusiasm for his candidacy.

### Rules of the Game

When President Lanusse set the campaign in motion, he also established study commissions to recommend changes in both the constitution and the election law that would facilitate the formation of a stable government. The constitutional reforms, which can be ratified or rejected by a constituent assembly when the next government takes power, were adopted over the objection of virtually all political parties and groups. The principal provisions are:

- a reduction of the presidential term from six to four years, with a limit of two terms;
- elimination of the electoral college, with the president and vice-president elected directly;
- concurrent four-year terms for all major officials and legislators, both national and provincial;
- expansion of the cabinet.

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### PRESIDENTIAL TICKETS

Candidates President/Vice President	Party or Coalition
Hector J. Campora Vicente Solano Lima	Justicialista Liberation Front (Peronist)
Ricardo Balbin Eduardo Gammond	Radical Civic Union
Francisco Manrique Rafael Martinez Raymonda	Popular Federalist Alliance
Oscar Alende Horacio Sueldo	Popular Revolutionary Alliance
Julio Chamizo Raul Ondars	New Force
Ezequiel Martinez Leopoldo Bravo	Federal Republican Alliance
Jorge Abelardo Ramos Jorge Silvetti	Popular Leftist Front
Juan Carlos Coral Nor Elba Sciappone	Socialist Workers' Party
Americo Ghioldi Rene Balestra	Democratic Socialist Party

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Reform of the election law was aimed at ending many years of fractionalization and minority government. In the most recent presidential election—10 years ago—the president elected had only 26 percent of the vote and little support in congress. The Lanusse government devised a complicated set of rules in an attempt to avoid a replay of that situation.

On 11 March the people will vote for a president, a vice president, 69 senators, 243 deputies, and for governors, legislators, and municipal officials in 22 provinces, the federal capital, and the territory of Tierra del Fuego. To avoid another minority government, the new election law states that candidates for president, vice-president, senator, and governor must receive an absolute majority. In races where no candidate wins a majority, a runoff between the two top candidates or slates will be held on 8 April. As an additional guarantee, the law permits the two leading presidential candidates to organize formal coalitions with any candidate who receives at least 15 percent of the vote in the first round.

### The Players

Nine presidential candidates will have their names on the ballot on 11 March. Only the Peronist, Hector Campora, has an outside chance of winning an absolute majority and thereby negating the need for a second round. Of the other eight, three or four have a chance of qualifying to participate in the runoff. None of the candidates has captured the imagination of the Argentine people, partly because all are tainted in some way with the failures of the past. Despite the government's efforts to encourage new political leadership by holding party primaries and nominating conventions, the Argentine political scene is still dominated by the old, and in many cases discredited, politicians who rose to prominence during the Peron years or immediately thereafter.



Hector Campora

First there is Hector Campora, a 64-year-old dentist who first achieved national recognition as Peron's president of the Chamber of Deputies from 1948 to 1953. Peron claims that Campora was selected by the party congress, but there is little doubt that he was handpicked by Peron. Peron has consistently worked to prevent the emergence of a rival to his own authority, and Campora represented the least threat. By selecting Campora, Peron also was able to delay the time when he must choose a successor or open the movement to a battle for leadership.

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Campora has managed to overcome much of his negative image with an energetic campaign and now has the support of groups which initially balked at his nomination. His campaign slogan "Campora for President, Peron to power" has been effective with the Peronist masses; if elected, he will undoubtedly be more his own man than the slogan indicates. Campora has vigorously attacked the military government, making the most out of alleged government efforts to block his candidacy. He has said little on substantive issues, although other Peronists have focused attention on foreign "imperialism"—meaning Brazil as often as the United States. Still, others have spoken of the need to maintain real wages and monitor foreign investment.



Ricardo Balbin

In the Radical Civic Union, Argentina's second largest political party, younger, reformist elements made a serious challenge for leadership by supporting 43-year-old Raul Alfonsin, but the "traditionalists" managed to nominate their long-time leader, Ricardo Balbin. Balbin, a 68-year-old lawyer, lost to Juan Peron in the 1951 elections and to Frondizi in 1958. This time out, he has concentrated on issues much more than his Peronist opponent, outlining a basically left-of-center course with nationalistic overtones. One of Balbin's proposals is to force foreign bankers who have recently acquired interests in Argentine financial institutions to give up their holdings. He has also said that the petroleum industry should probably be nationalized and that relations with Cuba should be studied.

The only relatively fresh face among the leaders in the presidential race is Francisco Manrique, Lanusse's former social welfare minister who left the administration to campaign. Manrique is the only candidate with anything resembling real appeal, but he has been hurt both by a lack of organized support and by the enmity of President Lanusse. Despite Manrique's energetic and well-publicized efforts on behalf of welfare recipients, he is generally considered right of center and his chief support comes from a group of conservative provincial



Francisco Manrique

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parties known as the Federalist Popular Alliance. He has made tougher statements against terrorism than his principal opponents, but has declined to spell out his economic programs. The indications are that, if elected, he would be more favorable to business, both foreign and domestic, than either the Peronists or Radicals, and his campaign coffers reportedly reflect business approval.

The fourth candidate with a chance of obtaining at least 15 percent of the vote is Oscar Alende of the Popular Revolutionary Alliance. The 63-year-old Alende is an opportunist, best known for his nationalistic, and occasionally anti-US, rhetoric. A former Radical who formed his own party for the 1963 presidential race, Alende has moved to the left and has the support of the illegal Communist Party. His platform calls for a substantial increase of state control of the economy, including the nationalization of all private banks and insurance companies and complete state control of energy and mineral resources. He favors the recovery of national enterprises that have been the "objects of the aggressive activities of foreign capital."



Oscar Alende

None of the five remaining candidates appears likely to obtain five percent of the vote. The poor showing of retired air force general Ezequiel Martinez is galling to President Lanusse, who pushed Martinez into the race at the last moment in the hope of undercutting Manrique and giving the military a voice in the negotiations that will precede a runoff. Most of the votes received by these sure losers will probably go to the non-Peronist candidate in the second round.

#### Who's Ahead

Election forecasting in Argentina is an uncertain art, and political conditions have so changed that past performance is not a reliable gauge on which to base expectations. The Peronists, for example, have not been tested at the ballot box for some time; they have not run a presidential candidate since Peron was ousted. They have supported candidates from other parties in congressional elections, but such candidates got no more than 30-35 percent of the vote. The Peronists could do considerably better this time

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when there seems to be a real chance of their attaining power. The presence of about 3 million youthful new voters further complicates attempts to judge Peronist strength. Hector Campora has aimed his campaign at this group, which apparently likes his criticism of the government and his refusal to take a firm stand against terrorism.

Polling in Argentina is unsophisticated, and the results provide only the roughest of guides to the political temper. All sources, however, do agree that the Peronists are leading the pack going into the first round. Estimates of their share of the vote range from about 35 percent to as high as 51 percent. Balbin and Manrique appear to believe that the Peronist total can be kept below 40 percent.

The real contest thus will be for the second runoff slot. The Radicals appeared to start from a base of at least 20 percent of the vote, but seem to be attracting little additional support. Manrique, on the other hand, has reportedly won the backing of a number of provincial caudillos and perhaps a couple of the other center-right presidential candidates. He plans to orchestrate the announcements of their support to build a band-wagon effect in the last days before the election. Business money has been flowing into his campaign, and this should help him to make a strong closing rush.

#### **The Military—The Ultimate Scorekeeper**

The improvement of Campora's chances in recent weeks has rekindled the military's deep-seated dislike of the Peronists. Twice since 1955 the armed forces have removed elected civilian presidents who were either unwilling or unable to restrain Peronist political activity. Now the generals themselves have opened the way for a possible resumption of power by the Peronists and are having second thoughts. President Lanusse, the man responsible for these elections, is said to be arguing in military councils for a move to block a Peronist victory or even to postpone the elections. He has failed to swing the majority of his top generals to his view, however, and for the time being appears to be concentrating on discrediting the Peronists in the eyes of the voters.

Criminal charges were brought against the Peronists in January for campaign statements that allegedly incited political violence. The government has formally called for the dissolution of the Justicialista Front. The government's case is a thin one, and it has delayed the trial to allow police and army units time to find a clear link between the Peronist candidates and the increase in terrorist action. Even if no evidence is found that will hold up in court, the government apparently hopes that the charges in themselves will swing some voters, particularly women, away from the Peronists.

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President Lanusse and the military have entered into a five-point pact, which, while guaranteeing that the elections will take place, imposes conditions on the new government. Principally, the agreement calls for a continued military role in the government. Commanding generals are to be named by their respective services and will head the three service ministries. The pact denies the right of the next government to free convicted terrorists or to interfere in counter-subversion campaigns. Lanusse believes that such "guarantees" are necessary to maintain military unity and the integrity of the armed forces in case of a Peronist victory at the polls.

Lanusse may yet seek to use the Peronist link with terrorists and the military's agreement to enforce certain minimum conditions to justify intervention in the election process. Army chief-of-staff General Lopez Aufranc opposes intervention now. Without his approval intervention would shatter armed forces unity. One development that might cause the general to shift his opposition would be an outbreak of violence during or immediately following the election.

### The Runoff

The Peronists have moderated their rhetoric in the last days of the campaign and have avoided provocative actions. This means that the balloting will probably be held as scheduled on 11 March. What happens thereafter will depend in large part on how much of the vote the Peronists get. Barring a first round majority for Campora, there will be a runoff election on 8 April, and the bargaining for the runoff slots will be intense.

While the Peronists are sure to lead the first round balloting, the chances of the Radicals putting together a coalition that can beat Campora in the second round would be improved immensely with every percentage point the Peronists fall below 40 percent. In the event Campora gets between 35 and 40 percent of the vote and the Radicals trail him by about 10 points, each side would concentrate on wooing outside support. The Radicals would then stand a good chance of gaining the edge in the runoff. If the Peronists fall below 35 percent, they may well seek a coalition with the Radicals. A runoff could then be avoided and the Peronists would share power in a Radical government.

Should Campora top 40 percent in the first round, he will be in a good position to win it all on 8 April. In these circumstances, a band-wagon psychology could well be built up as opportunistic politicians seeking favors throw their support to the Peronist candidate. The prospect of a Peronist victory would put considerable pressure on the generals to intervene.

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In many respects Francisco Manrique is the dark horse. He draws much of his support from conservatives in the provinces, but also does well among the urban poor. He may therefore cut into the vote of both the Radicals and the Peronists. He is given an outside chance of upsetting Balbin, the Radical standard bearer, for the second runoff slot; if he succeeded, he would still encounter considerable difficulty in putting together a winning team for the second round. The Radicals are ideologically much closer to the Peronists than to the provincial conservatives and might well join the Peronists against Manrique in exchange for important posts in the new administration. The result, again, would be a government with so strong a Peronist flavor that the military would be tempted to intervene.

A strong third place showing for Manrique is more likely and would give him considerable leverage in the maneuvering that will precede the runoff. Despite the fact that he is generally placed in the ranks of the anti-Peronists, Manrique is enough of an opportunist to be tempted by a deal with Campora. He probably could not, however, deliver all the provincial conservatives to the Peronists. Much the same thing can be said of Oscar Alende, who is likely to have at least 10 percent of the vote to bargain with.

As suggested above, there are almost as many possible combinations for the runoff as there are candidates; most of these would yield the presidency to either a Peronist or Radical. Peron has boasted for years that he has the support of the majority of Argentines. This claim will now be tested. If he comes up short, it is a near certainty that he will attribute his failure to the machinations of the military government, which has barred him from returning to his homeland again to campaign, and to the shortcomings of Hector Campora.

### **A Look Beyond the Election**

An elected government is scheduled to take power on 25 May 1973. If that government is headed by Ricardo Balbin or Francisco Manrique, the transition from the military junta to a civilian president should go relatively smoothly. If, however, the election on 11 March or the runoff on 8 April is won by the Peronists, there will be considerable pressure on the military to prevent the Peronists from taking over. Such a move would certainly be greeted by a rise in terrorist activity and could set off a chain reaction of civil violence. The armed forces would probably be able in time to reassert their control, but would probably be less able than they are now to govern effectively in the face of a hostile public and a weakening of military unity. This would open the way to extremist solutions from inside or outside the armed forces.

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It is still possible that the military would prefer to live with a Peronist resumption of power than to face the domestic consequences of denying the Peronists. There would not be all that much difference in the orientation of a government headed by a Radical or a Peronist. The differences between the two parties are mostly differences of style. There reportedly is an agreement between Balbin and Peron to share in the next government. Such a sharing of power would add stability to the government and avoid many of the problems with congress that have plagued other post-Peron administrations.

Under either a Radical or a Peronist administration, there will be a move toward greater state control of the economy and a display of increased economic nationalism. Peronist oratory would undoubtedly be more extreme than that of the Radicals, but both parties have advocated the same type of restrictions on foreign investment and are likely to move to nationalize foreign holdings in the fields of banking and petroleum. Both have stressed nationalism and "independence" in foreign affairs and this is likely—among other things—to lead to a more energetic assertion of Argentina's claim to a 200-mile territorial sea and an early move to restore relations with Cuba.

Whoever ends up in the presidential palace, the next government will be—as the military has stated—a transitional government. The military will continue to play a significant role in the formation of policy, despite the objections of all who ran for the presidency. The real test, as President Lanusse has said, will be whether the government that is elected can rule successfully and transfer power peacefully to an elected successor. In a nation where no president in 20 years has served out his term, the attainment of such a goal will be elusive.